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The University of Dayton

News Release

May 25, 1993

Contact: Rosemary Harty

CRAMMING DOESN'T PAY: SPELLING BEE CHAMPS TEND TO BE READERS, PRONOUNCER FOR NATIONAL CONTEST SAYS

DAYTON, Ohio -- Across the country, 235 students are poring over lists of obscure and unpronounceable words.

But it won't do them much good, says Alex Cameron, pronouncer for the Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee. Cameron, a professor of English at the University of Dayton and pronouncer for the bee for the past 13 years, says champions don't make the final cut by cramming words. In this era of video-game mania, there are still kids who love reading, Cameron says.

"In the first couple of rounds, the words come from various lists that they have an opportunity to study," Cameron said. "Eventually, they get to a point where we give them a word out of the dictionary. It happens at every bee, where the real spellers are separated from the ones who memorize lists."

To win, "you also have to know a lot about word roots and the rules of spelling."

"Real" spellers, Cameron has noted, are seldom single-minded about the contest. They enjoy a wide variety of interests from sports to raising animals. "Computers, chess, drama -- every one of them tends to have a wide range of interests," he said.

For the past few weeks, Cameron has been practicing the pronunciation of the 1,000 words that will test the spelling prowess of this year's spellers.

What attracts them to the spelling bee? "Some like the competition," Cameron said. Others just like the free trip to Washington, he added.

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The Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee is June 2 and 3 in Washington, D.C. **Alex Cameron** can be reached until May 28 at (313) 584-1333, May 29 through June 3 at the Capital Hilton, (202) 393-1000.

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